

### **Psalms 74:0 ¶ Maschil of Asaph.**

“Maschil” is defined as an instructive or didactic poem in the Hebrew. The fact that it is ascribed to Asaph is confusing since the content of the psalm makes reference to the destruction of the temple. I am guessing, then, that the reference is probably to a descendant of Asaph. The sons of Asaph were still identified as noted musicians as recorded in the genealogical record of those returning from Babylon by Nehemiah.

*Nehemiah 7:44 “The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight.”*

Guzik posits the possibility that since Asaph is identified as a prophet, this could be a prophetic poem. If so, this is quite an amazing prophecy. I don’t think the possibility can be discounted considering the detailed prophecies of Daniel in particular.

### **Psalms 74:1 ¶ O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?**

The psalmist questions why God is still so angry with His people and wonders if He has rejected them forever.

I am reminded that the predominant belief was that God would never allow His people to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians despite the ever-present ministry of Jeremiah (in Judah) and Ezekiel (in Babylon) among them. The truth was finally driven home when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Once the captives returned home, they faced a lot of adversity from people in the surrounding area in the process of rebuilding both the temple and the city walls.

### **Psalms 74:2 Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.**

The psalmist calls for God to remember the people that He had created and possessed (both from the Hebrew for “purchased”) of old. They were designated as the branch or tribe (both from the Hebrew for “rod”) of God’s inheritance among the people on earth—His chosen possession.

*Deuteronomy 7:6 “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.”*

I think the redemption being referenced is God’s deliverance of His people out of the land of Egypt.

The psalmist reminds God that mount Zion was noted as His dwelling place on earth.

*2 Chronicles 7:16 “For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.”*

**Psalms 74:3** Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even all that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

**Psalms 74:4** Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs.

**Psalms 74:5** *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.

**Psalms 74:6** But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

**Psalms 74:7** They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.

**Psalms 74:8** They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

The psalmist goes on to describe how the enemy destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. The NLT reads a bit easier: *“Walk through the awful ruins of the city; see how the enemy has destroyed your sanctuary. There your enemies shouted their victorious battle cries; there they set up their battle standards. They chopped down the entrance like woodcutters in a forest. With axes and picks, they smashed the carved paneling. They set the sanctuary on fire, burning it to the ground. They utterly defiled the place that bears your holy name. Then they thought, “Let’s destroy everything!” So they burned down all the places where God was worshiped.”*

We know from scripture that the temple was a very beautiful structure with many beautiful carvings and furnishings. How sad that the people lost the privilege of preserving its beauty because they chose to rebel against God.

**Psalms 74:9** We see not our signs: *there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.*

The psalmist notes that there is no longer any evidence that God is among them. There are no longer any prophets ministering among them, no one to tell them how long things are going to continue as they are.

**Psalms 74:10** O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

**Psalms 74:11** Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

The psalmist asks God how long He is going to allow their enemies to mock them and blaspheme Him. He pleads for God to take His right hand (recognized as the strongest arm) out of His pocket and judge them for their actions against Him and His people.

**Psalms 74:12** ¶ For God *is* my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

**Psalms 74:13** Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.

**Psalms 74:14** Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and gavest him to be meat* to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

**Psalms 74:15** Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.

As the psalmist begins to close, he begins to remember how God had intervened for them as their King of old. He had worked miracles on their behalf. He had parted the waters of the sea to allow them to escape the armies of Pharaoh and destroyed those armies in the waters. They had walked to safety on dry land.

When I read the phrase “the heads of leviathan,” it makes me think of how there is one main enemy in charge of all rebellion against God in creation—Satan. His many heads represent those that have fallen for his deceit and are determined to take as many down with them as they can.

**Psalms 74:16 The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.**

**Psalms 74:17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.**

The psalmist recognizes that God is ruler over His creation. He controls day and night; in fact, He created and established the workings of light and the sun. It was God that established all the boundaries and coastlands on earth. It was God that instituted the flow of the seasons.

*Genesis 1:3–5 “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.”*

*Genesis 1:16–18 “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.”*

*Deuteronomy 32:8 “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”*

*Job 38:10–11 “And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?”*

*Genesis 1:14 “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years....”*

**Psalms 74:18 ¶ Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.**

**Psalms 74:19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.**

**Psalms 74:20 Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.**

The psalmist asks God to remember how the enemy have defied Him and blasphemed His name. He pleads for God not to let them destroy “thy turtledove” (a term of

endearment that the psalmist is using to identify the people of Israel in relationship to the LORD). He calls for God to remember His covenant.

I believe this is a reference to His unconditional covenant with the patriarchs and not the conditional covenant that He made with Moses.

I like the simple translation of the NLT for verse 20: *“Remember your covenant promises, for the land is full of darkness and violence!”*

**Psalms 74:21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.**

**Psalms 74:22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.**

**Psalms 74:23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.**

The psalmist is praying for God to relieve the oppression of His people. He pleads for God to take action on behalf of His people in light of how the wicked are mocking and blaspheming Him and growing bolder in their actions by the day.

Spurgeon: *“When error grows too bold its day is near, and its fall certain. Arrogance foreshadows ripeness of evil, and the next step is rottenness. Instead of being alarmed when bad men grow worse and more audacious, we may reasonably take heart, for the hour of their judgment is evidently near.”*